Amber, Pressure, and the Folded Field of the Drive

From Freud’s Drang to Lacan’s Circuit of Montage

Part II

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Lacan’s Seminar XIII, Session XVIII begins precisely where Freud’s definition becomes spatially troubling. The drive, Lacan insists, is “not an instinct, but a montage … between realities of an essentially heterogeneous level.” Here a decisive opening appears. The drive is already an assembly across domains that do not naturally coincide: somatic excitation, psychical demand, the bodily rim, and the contingent object. What earlier appeared as a single energetic push reveals itself as a structured coupling.

The clinical scenes discussed in the first part already make this visible. When the nursing child closes its eyes, pressure (*Drang*) is redistributed from the scopic circuit toward the oral one. In *Las Meninas* and in young Rembrandt’s studio, the operation is spatialized: the turned canvas functions like a structural eyelid, shifting intensity from the look toward the gaze. These are not communicating vessels in a hydraulic sense; they are heterogeneous circuits whose temporary couplings produce the economy of the drive.

This heterogeneity is not accidental but constitutive. And it is precisely at this juncture that Freud’s difficult thesis about love and hate must be placed. In *Triebe und Triebschicksale*, he shows that love and hate do not originate from a single affective substance. They belong to different regimes that only later appear unified under the economic polarity of **Lust / Unlust** (pleasure / unpleasure).[1] What looks like a simple opposition is already the effect of a montage.

Why Love and Hate Cannot Be Magnetic Opposites

[1] „*Liebe und Haß, die sich uns als volle materielle Gegensätze vorstellen, stehen also doch in keiner einfachen Beziehung zueinander. Sie sind nicht aus der Spaltung eines Urgemeinsamen hervor-gegangen, sondern haben verschiedene Ursprünge und haben ein jedes seine eigene Entwicklung durchgemacht, bevor sie sich unter dem Einfluß der Lust Unlustrelation zu Gegensätzen formiert haben. Es erwächst uns hier die Aufgabe, zusammenzustellen, was wir von der Genese von Liebe und Haß wissen*.” (*Triebe Und Triebschicksale | Sigmund Freud*, 185 f.)

عشق جانان چو سنگ مغناطیس
جان ما را به قرب خویش کشید

The love of the Beloved is a lodestone:
it draws the soul into its own nearness.

—Rumi

Rumi's magnetic image articulates a flat ontology of attraction. The world, in this vision, is not divided between inert matter and living spirit; every entity stands within its own orbit of inclination and attraction جذب. What modern physics would later formalize as force appears here phenomenologically as love. Attraction is not one affect among others; it is the primitive consistency of the cosmos. Repulsion, from this perspective, is never fundamental but a local misreading of a more global ordering of pulls and distances.

Rumi makes this even more explicit when he lets the so-called "inanimate" speak:

> ما سمیعیم و بصیریم و خوشیم
> با شما نامحرمان ما خامشیم
> چون شما سوی جمادی می‌روید
> محرم جان جمادان چون شوید؟
> از جمادی عالم جانها روید
> غلغل اجزای عالم بشنوید
>
> *We are hearing, seeing, alive with delight—yet to you*
> *strangers we fall silent.*
> *If you keep calling us "mere matter," how will you ever be*
> *intimate with the soul of things?*
> *From the inanimate the world of souls unfolds—listen: the*
> *whole of existence is murmuring.*

Here the stones themselves claim perception. The error lies not in matter's muteness but in the observer's deafness. Read through a contemporary lens, the passage indeed resonates with a proto–object-oriented intuition: objects are not passive residues but loci of withdrawn interiority and relation. In such a flattened ontological field, attraction simply is love in its most general form.

Freud's metapsychology begins elsewhere. In *Triebe und Triebschicksale* he writes that *hate* in relation to the *Object* is *older* than love:

> Der Haß ist als Relation zum Objekt älter als die Liebe…
> (*Triebe Und Triebschicksale | Sigmund Freud*, 186)[2]

His claim is strictly economic and organismic. Hate emerges from the primordial rejection by the narcissistic ego of an external world that produces

[2] *Triebe und Triebschicksale | Sigmund Freud*. (n.d.). Retrieved February 21, 2026, from https://www.freudedition.net/werke/triebe-und-triebschicksale/druckschrift-4

unpleasure. It remains structurally tied to the self-preservative drives, so that conflicts between ego-drives and sexual drives repeatedly reproduce the opposition of hate and love. When the ego-drives dominate — as in the sadistic-anal organization — they stamp the drive-goal with the character of hate:

> Wenn die Ichtriebe die Sexualfunktion beherrschen … so leihen sie auch dem Triebziel die Charaktere des Hasses. (ibid.)

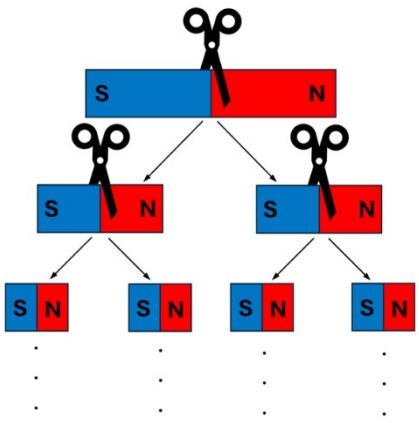
He writes that love and hate "are not derived from the splitting of something originally common, but have different origins and have each undergone their own development." This yields a decisive theoretical prohibition. Love and hate cannot be treated as mirror poles on a flat affective field. They are heterogeneous in their genesis. Hate, Freud argues, is developmentally earlier: it emerges from the narcissistic ego's primordial rejection of what produces unpleasure and remains structurally tied to the self-preservative drives. Love, by contrast, originates in narcissistic autoerotic satisfaction and only subsequently becomes object-directed through the detours of libidinal organization. What appears later as an opposition is therefore the secondary effect of two differently rooted economies.

On the other hand, what appears at first as a contradiction with Rumi is in fact a shift of register. Rumi speaks at the level of a cosmological attraction prior to the organism's defensive partitioning. Freud speaks at the moment when a vulnerable living system must police its borders. Hate is therefore not the metaphysical rival of love; it is the ego's first technical response to overstimulation under the regime of **Lust/Unlust**. Only within this regulatory economy do love and hate appear as if they were binary opposites.

This is precisely where Lacan's intervention becomes decisive. By defining the drive as "*a montage between realities of an essentially heterogeneous level*," he shows that the Freudian opposition is already topologically structured. The organism's border-policing does not abolish the deeper field of attraction; it folds it. Love and hate are not magnetic poles of a single substance but effects of how the drive's circuit negotiates its rims, objects, and returns.

From this perspective, the apparent primacy of hate marks the moment when the flat field of attraction must be operationally segmented for a speaking body to persist. The binary of pleasure and unpleasure is thus a secondary organization imposed upon a more heterogeneous economy of *Drang*. What Rumi intuits as universal drawing-together reappears in Freud as regulated admission and rejection, and in Lacan as the topological torsion of the drive itself.

Love is not simply opposed by hate. It is refracted through the very borders that make hate thinkable.



Splitting a magnet never isolates a pure pole; each cut immediately produces a new N–S pair. The magnetic field thus remains geometrically simple and self-similar — a continuous linkage of symmetric charges. One might compare this, cautiously, to the autoerotic closure Freud describes in early narcissism, where satisfaction can still appear relatively self-contained. But the relation between love and hate does not obey this symmetry. Because their genetic

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roots differ, their vectors do not lie on a single reversible axis. They cross without coinciding. What Freud names ambivalence is precisely this coexistence of heterogeneous currents within the same psychic field. Here the geometry must change. The field is no longer flat; it begins to fold.

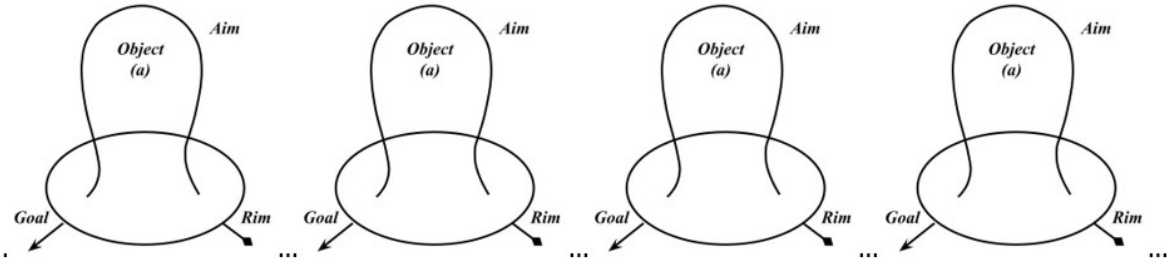
The Rim and the Return

Lacan’s decisive question is: what spatial support could sustain Freud’s constant *Drang*? His answer is exact:

> this constancy of the Drang can only be developed by supposing that it emanates from a surface … supported on a constant edge. (Semimar XIII, session XVIII , The Object of Psychoanalysis 18.5.1966, 218)

Only a rim can hold pressure without exhausting it. From this follows the crucial shift: the drive does not advance in a straight line toward discharge. It returns. As Lacan formulates it, every drive includes a movement back to its base; it “describes a circuit (tour), it goes around something.” What Freud isolated economically as persistence receives here its topological support.

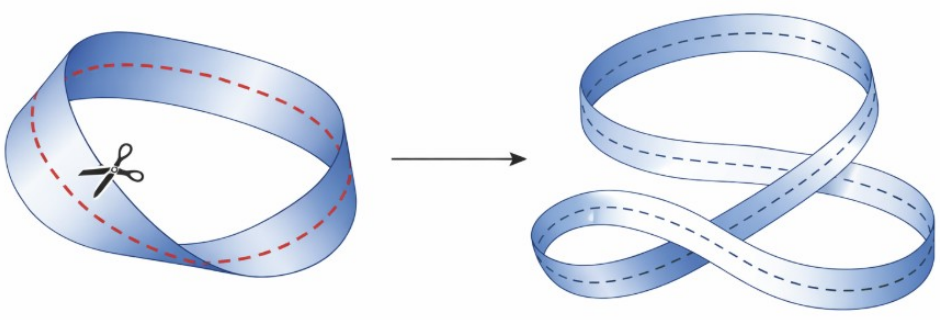
The graph of the drive thus emerges not as a vector of release but as a loop traced along a bodily rim. The pressure persists because the path is curved. Satisfaction does not terminate the movement; it reinstalls it:



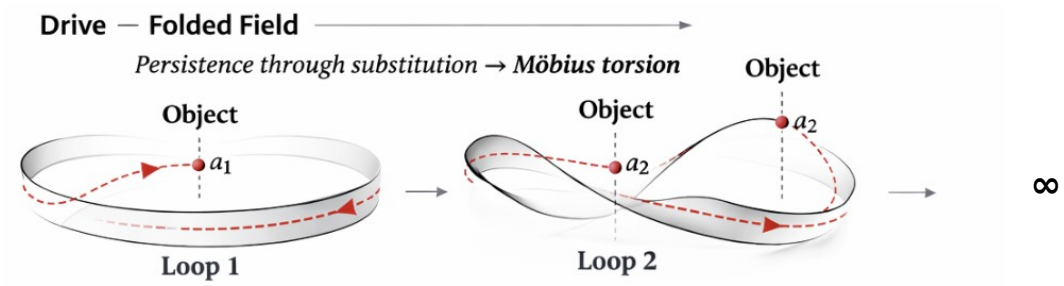
What this diagram still risks concealing is that the curvature of a single drive circuit does not yet exhaust the phenomenon of persistence. Taken in isolation, each loop appears closed and local. But clinical experience — and Lacan’s own insistence on repetition — shows that the drive does not merely circulate; it insists across substitutions.

Seen in sequence, the concatenation of drive graphs no longer forms a simple series of circuits. It has the structure of a twist: Each new object both renews and displaces the previous circuit, so that the line of satisfaction advances only by turning back on itself. The result is structurally closer to a Möbius logic than to a closed loop: a surface on which inside and outside are no longer cleanly separable and demands an endless repetition and return.

The comparison with magnetism now reveals its limit. When a magnet is cut, each fragment reproduces the same bipolar structure; the field remains locally self-similar. Magnetic opposition is therefore flat and indefinitely divisible. The Möbius band behaves otherwise. When it is split, its one-sided property does not simply replicate; the twist redistributes itself across a longer surface. What is preserved is not local symmetry but global torsion:

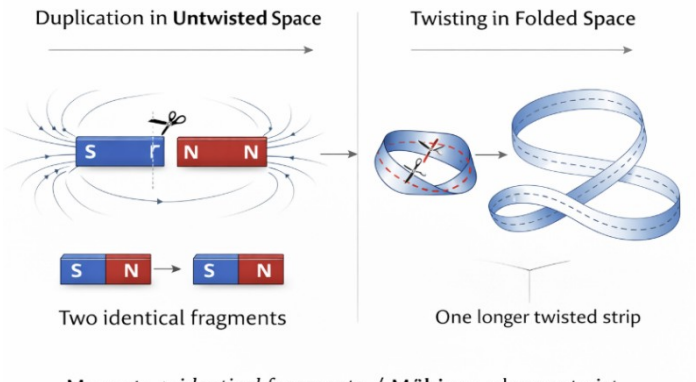


This difference is decisive for the theory of the drive. Love and hate cannot be modeled on magnetic poles because their relation is not locally reversible. The persistence of *Drang* depends instead on a structural twist that survives substitutions of object and circuit. The psychic field is therefore not merely curved but folded: its consistency is maintained not by duplication but by a topology of return.



In this sense, desire is not attached to any particular object a. The objects are relay points. What endures is the torsion of the path — the persistence of *Drang* as it threads heterogeneous supports. The drive survives its objects because it is written in the twist that links one rim to the next.

The full picture is therefore not merely curved but **folded**. What appears as a succession of satisfactions is the visible trace of a single, continuous whirl of return.



A cut in an untwisted space duplicates identity; a cut in a folded space redistributes structure. When the magnet is split, each fragment preserves the same bipolar quiddity — the flat symmetry of N and S remains locally intact. When the Möbius band is cut, however, its one-sided character disappears: the result is a longer strip with two full turns and two distinct sides. What magnetism conserves by duplication, the Möbius transforms by torsion. The psychic field follows the latter logic: persistence is maintained not by simple repetition of opposites but by a twist that survives every cut and reappears as the continuing Drang of the drive.

The objects that momentarily support the circuit change. The breast gives way to the gaze, the gaze to the voice, the voice to the letter. Yet the pressure does not dissipate. What persists is not the object but the **trajectory of return itself**.

The Tab and the Drain: Constructing the Whirlpool

A helpful image is the relation between a **tab** (a protruding edge) and a **drain** in a basin.

The drain is not itself the lack. It is a **constructed representation of lack**, a functional hole around which flow organizes. Water does not simply fall into it. Under the right conditions, a whirl forms.

Two features are essential:

- the central aperture (structural void),
- the boundary conditions that sustain circulation.

Lacan’s **objet petit a** occupies precisely this structural position. It is not the lack itself but the operational point around which the drive turns.

The drive does not aim to fill the hole.
It aims to circulate around it.

Viscosity and Psychic Resistance

If one cautiously extends the fluid analogy, another parameter becomes illuminating: **viscosity**.

In physical fluids, viscosity resists flow and shapes the character of vortices. In the psychic economy, something homologous appears in what Freud later formalizes as resistance.

Psychic life is not frictionless. The drive’s circulation is thickened, delayed, and deformed by:

- repression,
- fixation,

- defensive formations.

One might say — metaphorically but usefully — that **psychic resistance functions like viscosity in the field of jouissance**. It does not stop the whirl; it shapes its texture.

The Closed Eyes of the Infant

This framework clarifies a subtle but telling phenomenon. Infants often close their eyes while feeding. Adults frequently do the same in moments of intense sexual enjoyment.

If the system were merely maximizing sensory input, the eyes should remain open. But the drive is not an information-maximizing device.

Closing the eyes can:

- reduce scopic dispersion,
- stabilize the oral rim,
- tighten the local circuit of jouissance.

The field folds inward. The whirl intensifies.

Returning to Amber

The medieval thinkers who spoke of the “love” of **کهربا** were working with an intuition that modern language obscured but did not entirely eliminate. Attraction in nature — and in the psyche — is rarely a simple straight-line pull.

Freud supplied the constant pressure: **Drang**.
Lacan supplied the edge and the circuit.
Topology reveals the fold.

What appears phenomenologically as love and hate emerges from a deeper field where attraction and expulsion are already at work — but no longer on a flat magnetic plane.

Final Orientation

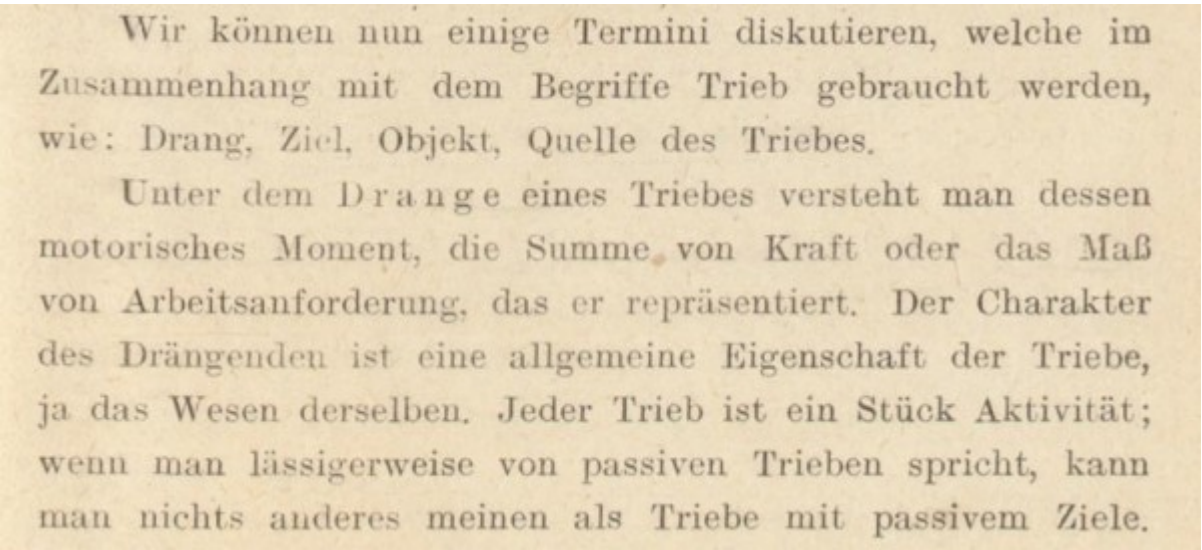
The drive graph is the spatial consequence of taking Freud literally.

If the drive is truly constant, it cannot simply discharge.
If it cannot discharge, it must circulate.
If it circulates, it must turn around a constructed void.

The drain is not the lack.
The whirl is not the flow.
And love and hate are not opposite poles.

They are folded vectors in a field whose true center is the object that can never quite be reached — **objet petit a**.

XVI. TRIEBE UND TRIEBSCHICKSALE.).pdf



Wir können nun einige Termini diskutieren, welche im Zusammenhang mit dem Begriffe Trieb gebraucht werden, wie: Drang, Ziel, Objekt, Quelle des Triebes.

Unter dem Drange eines Triebes versteht man dessen motorisches Moment, die Summe von Kraft oder das Maß von Arbeitsanforderung, das er repräsentiert. Der Charakter des Drängenden ist eine allgemeine Eigenschaft der Triebe, ja das Wesen derselben. Jeder Trieb ist ein Stück Aktivität; wenn man lässigerweise von passiven Trieben spricht, kann man nichts anderes meinen als Triebe mit passivem Ziele.

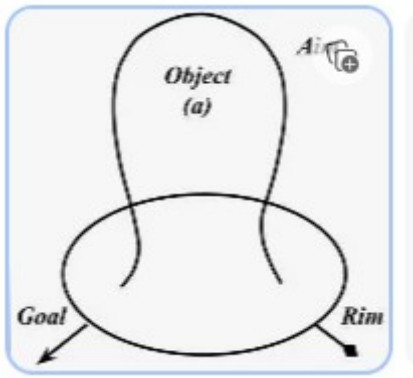
Translation: We can now discuss certain terms that are used in connection with the concept of the drive, such as: pressure (Drang), aim (Ziel), object (Objekt), and source (Quelle) of the drive.

By the pressure of a drive we understand its motor moment — the sum of force, or the measure of the demand for work that it represents.

The character of being pressing (Drängend) is a general property of the drives — indeed, their very essence.

Every drive is a piece of activity; when one carelessly speaks of passive drives, one can mean nothing other than drives with a passive aim.

Then this paragraph is perhaps the main source working behind the Drive Graph:



English sourcefor the Freud’s book/essay:

[Freud, Sigmund. Part 1. Drives and Destinations of Drive, 1915 | PDF | Sadomasochism | Neurosis (scribd.com)]

The driving force of an impulse is understood as its motor factor, the sum of force or the measure of the work demand that she represents. That demanding character is a universal property of drives, and even their very essence. Every drive is a fragment of activity; when passively driven impulses are negligently talked about, nothing else can be mentioned what drives with a passive goal (see note(157)).